





VOLUME SIX

• JUST DESSERTS •

WRITTEN BY W. MAXWELL PRINCE
ART BY MARTÍN MORAZZO
COLORS BY CHRIS O'HALLORAN
LETTERING BY GOOD OLD NEON
COVER DESIGN BY SHANNA MATUSZAK & TRICIA RAMOS
INTERIOR DESIGN BY GOOD OLD NEON

"Why must the goodness of all wishes come to nothing?"
-Robert Coover, "The Gingerbread House"



Get in touch, it you'd like. Email wmaxwellprince@gmail.com

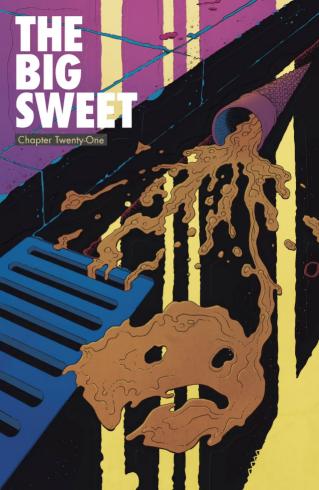
IMAGE COMICS, INC.

Todd McFarlone: President
Jim Valentine: Vice President
Mora Silvestri: Chief Executive Officer
Erik Larsen: Chief Financial Officer
Robert Kirkman: Chief Operating Officer
Frict Stephenson: Publisher / Chief Creative Officer
Nicole Lapalme: Controller
Leanna Counter: Accounting Analyst
Sue Korpela: Accounting & NR Manager
Maria Erisk: Talent Lüsson
Jeff Boison: Director of Sales & Publishing Planning
Dirk Wood: Director of Sales & Publishing Planning
Dirk Wood: Director of International Sales & Liconsi

Chloa Remos: Book Market & Library Soles Manager
Emilio Boutiste: Digital Soles Coordinator
Lon Schaffman: Specialty Soles Coordinator
Kar Solazar: Director of PR & Marketing
Drew Fitzgerold: Marketing Content Associate
Heather Doornink: Production Director
Drew Gill: Art Director
Hinder Committee Committee Committee Committee
Trick Cames: Traffic Manager
Heissa Gifford: Content Manager
Erika Schantz: Senior Production Artist
Ryna Brewer: Production Artist
Deanna Phelps: Production Artist

IMAGECOMICS.COM

ICE CREAM MAN, VOL. 6: JUST DESSERTS. June 2021. Published by Image Comics, no. Office of publication: PO BOX 14457, Parlland, OR 97293. Capyright © 2021 W. Maxwell Prince, Martin Morazzo & Chris O'Halloran. All rights reserved. Comtains material originally published in single magazine form as ICE CREAM MAN #21-24. "Ice Cream Man," it's lagos, and the likenesses of all characters herein are trademarks of W. Maxwell Prince, Martin Morazzo & Chris O'Halloran unless otherwise noted. "Image" and the Image Comics lagos are registered trademarks of Image Comics, Inc. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted, in any form or by any means (except for short excerpts for journalistic or review purposes), without the express written permission of W. Maxwell Prince, Martin Morazzo & Chris O'Halloran, or Image Comics, Inc. All names, characters, events, and locales in this publication are entirely fictional. Any resemblance to actual persons (living or dead), events, or places, without soliric intent, is coincidental. DIGITAL EDITION. For international rights, contact forecalmensime@imagecomics.com.



























































































































































































































































































































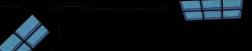












Maybe I should go home and try to save my marriage.

Maybe the end ain't as near as we think...





"Oh, my God..."







































.//

























































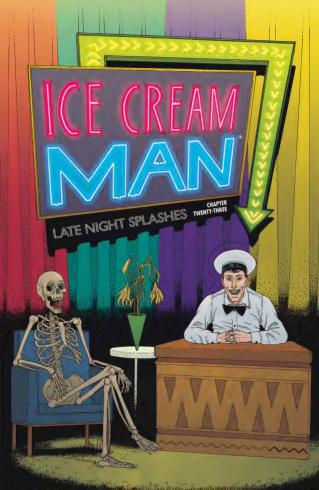












DRAMATIS PERSONAE



MACK BENSON

Host of Tonight, Tonight with Mack Benson



BRIAN PARDUE

Exec Producer of Tonight, Tonight with Mack Benson

TONIGHT, **TONIGHT**

WITH MACK BENSON



Intern. Toniaht, Toniaht

Page Program



RICK SACCHARINE

Animal Trainer



LORETTA BENSON

Wife of Mack Benson

BRIAN

4 HOURS AFTER THE INCIDENT

In the clamor of the emergency ward, the only words that come to Brian Pardue's rattled mind are: *poor Cormac*.

Most people don't know this, but Mack Benson, America's most beloved late night talk show host, is actually named *Cormac*. Cormac Patrick Benson, Jr., as it reads on the birth certificate.

But Brian knows, because Brian's been there from the beginning.

He was there in the early days, at the anemic stand-up clubs, where Mack would slowly hone what would become his signature brand of mordant, deadpan observation. He was there that one time in San Jose when a drunk heckler tossed a head of lettuce right at Mack's chest and said, "Try being a little fumny, why don't ya, pal?"

Afterwards, Brian and Mack sat at the bar and had a good laugh when Mack pulled the whole thing of romaine from his blazer pocket and took a big, slobbering bite out of it. Those were the days, and Brian was there for them.

Brian was there for Mack's rise—his ascension into the upper stratosphere of celebrity. For the gigs at the Palladium, the Apollo, the King's Theater. For the sitcom guest spots, the feature film turns, the taped stand-up specials.

He was there the day the network offered Mack the midnight talk show, which Brian—as associate producer, and then producer, and then executive producer—helped shape into a tight, polished, and completely refined nightly comedy-variety machine. Topical? You bet. Original? Absolutely. Hilarious? Always—it's Mack, for crying out loud.

And he was there, of course, on that unforgettable and cloudless evening, when, after the retirement of Tommy Lively, the network handed Mack the prime time slot: the eleven o'clock late show. The most coveted, most watched nightly talk program in the country. Ten million viewers per episode, the money-minting holy grail of demo 18-49.

Boy, did they drink that night. Mack was barely conscious by the end of it. Brian had to carry him all the way back to Mack's apartment on the Upper West Side (Mack outweighing his producer by nearly ninety pounds), where Brian tucked his old friend into bed and then slept on the floor next to it, waking occasionally to make sure Mack wasn't choking on his own vomit. The next morning, Cormac Patrick Benson, Jr. would wake up and go about the business of being a true-blue megastar.

And since Brian was there for all of this, so, too, was he there four hours ago, when a sixteen-foot Burmese python—one of the many "wild" friends of the night's second-slot guest, animal trainer Rick Saccharine—wrapped itself around Mack Benson's body, right on stage for everyone to see, and began taking large, fist-sized bites out of the host's face.

My god, poor Cormac. His face—bearer of that lovely, ageless smile—was chewed to bits by a snake as thick as a telephone pole.

Brian remembers being told as a child, when his younger sister fell nose-first off a set of monkey bars, that there's an inordinate amount of blood under the human face. Something about the abundance of vessels in the chin and cheeks. Suzie bled, he recalls, what seemed like gallons of red liquid.

And so did Mack-live on late night TV.





CADENCE

4 HOURS AFTER THE INCIDENT

Cadence pulls another cigarette from the pack. She's been sitting here, on the curb outside the hospital, for a few hours now.

My god, all that blood, she thinks. A person's got no business having that much stuff inside them.

She inhales, and it occurs to her on that first drag (of her tenth menthol) that her internship at Tonight, Tonight was supposed to last another two weeks. But it doesn't seem so likely now.

The snake ate Mack's face on camera.



The day had started typically: she made a coffee run for the writers room, taking pains to assure that each member of that self-satisfied, over-loud boys' club got their macchiatos and ristrettos and what-all exactly as they wished. To deviate from their complicated espresso orders meant incurring their wrath, such as it was—a kind of limp-dicked patronization (Um, sweetheart, a flat white has no foam) that, though completely impotent, still made Cadence want to kick a hole in the wall and do violence to one or all of their fresh-faced lyy League coterie.

From there, it was on to Eddy down at cue cards, who was already plastering his large, readable-from-a-mile-away handwriting to a piece of foam board. She liked Eddy—he had a sleepy quality to him, and seemed sort of lost in his sea of legible capital letters.

"Anything you need, Ed?" Cadence asked.

He had taken a step back to read what

he'd written. "Rick Saccharine. What happened to our usual animal guy? Steve What's-his-name?"

"Coffee? A sandwich? Fresh markers?" she offered.

Eddy, still looking at the board, pursed his lips in disappointment. "God fucking dammit. Saccharine has *two* Cs."

He broke the board in half over his knee and handed it to Cadence. "Trash," he said, and started writing the card from scratch.

And then her favorite part of any day: a check-in with the host. Mack Flippin' Benson! The man whose megawatt smile had been brightening her evenings since she was a kid. She remembered late nights on the living room floor of her parents' house in Chicago, fighting sleep so that she could catch Mack's opening monologue. Yes, she was too young back then to understand most of the jokes, but there was just something about his smile—it was like a reassurance. a pat on the back before bedtime. In his avuncular way, Mack made you feel like all the troubles of the world were no more powerful than a bunch of flies buzzing around your face. You just had to swat them awayshoo don't hother me!

When she knocked on his office door, he was flossing at his desk. His face brightened—a million watts, every time!—when he saw her there. He tossed the thin dental string away and made a gesture with his index finger, as if to say, "Come on over, darling." She grinned, and locked the door behind her.



Back on the curb, her thoughts turn once more to blood. His face, she thinks. He was leaking out of the holes in his face

She reaches for cigarette number eleven.



LORETTA

4 HOURS AFTER THE INCIDENT

Loretta Benson is in a rush to get to the hospital, but traffic on the 405 is bumper-to-bumper.

She pulls into the right lane to pass a slow-moving sedan and is stymied immediately by a slower-moving SUV. The cars are all crawling, advancing down the freeway inches at a time. Why are so many people driving this late at night? she wonders.

About forty-five minutes ago, Loretta received a call from Brian, her husband's longtime friend and current executive producer.

"It wr-wrapped itself around h-him," Brian stammered over the phone.

"What are you talking about?" she asked. "What wrapped itself around him?"

"The python!" he yelled. "The gigantic Burmese python!"

Oh, Brian. Another unwitting satellite caught up in the planetary orbit of Big Mack. Another fawning supplicant in thrall to that irresistible, goofy Benson smile.

From what she could make out through Brian's lovelorn stutters, Mack had suffered—
on air, apparently—a number of devastating bites from a very large snake, as well as a litany of broken bones from the beast's predatory, pre-bite constriction. He was currently undergoing emergency surgery at St. Generous Hospital, which, by the speed the 405 was moving, she wouldn't get to for another hour.

She honks her horn to get the driver of the SUV to stop looking at his phone, so that he can roll forward another few feet, which allows her to do the same.

She's always hated the wild animal

segments. Steve Hanlin and his funnu little creatures: holl weevils and red clawed scorpions; barn owls and Mexican horned lizards: albino wolverines and Brazilian pandas; a veritable menagerie of huge, ugly. carnivorous birds. They'd all seemed so dangerous, so hungry, though Steve always reassured Mack that the beasts were strictly under his control, would do no harm to anvone unless provoked. Still, Mack loved to make a play at fear for the audience; he would nervously climb onto the top of his desk as a dinosauric tortoise crawled past his feet, or do his "Well isn't he friendly!" shtick as some little rodent scurried up the arm of his suit jacket and across his shoulders.

Loretta honks again, this time at no one in particular. Up ahead, through the space between serried vehicles, she sees the cause of the backup: an ice cream truck has tipped over in the middle lane and is lying on its side like a beached whale. From its hull sluices streams of multi-colored ice cream, parting and then re-connecting a few feet later on the asphalt in a variegated puddle.

For a moment, she licks her lips the same way she did when she was a child waiting for the ice cream man to careen down her street.

"Boy, I hope he hasn't run out of chocolate," she says now, to no one.

The thing is: Steve Hanlin retired last year.
The animal trainer on tonight's show was
some new guy. Well whoever he is, she thinks,
I hope he's got a good lawyer.

As it so happens, she herself has just left the offices of some very good lawyers, who are finalizing the paperwork for her divorce from Mack. She'd planned to present the documents to him tomorrow morning, but so much for that—Mr. Benson's been mutilated.

She rolls forward another few feet and honks once more for good measure.



MACK

4 HOURS AFTER THE INCIDENT

Hot pain like color red everywhere from top to bottom. Hot in face, hot in body, hot in legs, hot in tips of toes.

White clouds in front of my eyes—gauze? Yes. Wrapped tight in layers, this way and that. Momma I do believe I am a mummy!

Room spin-spinning, can feel narcotics swimming through blood. Can hear the drip drip drip of IV. Beeps of heart monitor, beeps of other machines.

Hot pain, hot like a knife vivisecting lengthwise. Can feel catheter in my johnson, can taste bitterness of pain medicine in my mouth under cotton wrap. Yum!

Ladies and gentlemen, it's time for our next quest.

It goes: read Eddy's cue cards, turn to Camera One. Get nod from Brian offscreen, turn and smile into Camera Two. Give them that Benson smile.

Bring out guest, be obsequious. Never betray boredom, show them those pearly whites, give them that Benson smile.

Can feel tight plaster cast around midsection, can feel ribs afloat inside stomach. Someone's taken the sticks off the rack! Ho boy!

The snake ate my face. The big snake squeezed my body and ate my face.



Pee a little bit, feel liquid leave johnson and enter tube. Is there a bedpan, too?

Hear slithering on floor next to hospital bed. Hear hiss-lisp: Mack ith time to thay thomething funny.

Well, isn't he friendly!

Momma I do believe the snake is here in the room with me. It wants me to tell jokes.

"You hear about the late show host that got eaten on screen?" What a *classic*!

Well lookee here. The snake has friends! Had no idea. Little kind of goblin guy, green and naked. Little boy holding a balloon. A collie in a straitjacket. "You hear the one about the dog in the zoot suit?"

Woah, this medicine is doing something kooky to my brain. Get it together, Mack. You've got a show to host!

Mack, your faith ith mithing a few pee-theth. Will someone make this goshdarn snake shut its trap?

Shit comes out and plops against metal. Yes, there is a bedpan. Momma, baby needs a diaper change right about now...

There's that pain again, hot like a frying pan. Don't touch or OUCHY. Knife slicing right through me, from the tippy top to the tippy bottom of Cormac Benson.

Is Loretta on her way? And where's Brian?
Brian with his little post-it notes and his
worries and his unrequited love. You know
all about Brian, his secrets.

Whath a thecret, Misther Benthon?

Not now, snake. I'm trying to convalesce here!



Afternoon goes: floss your teeth, fuck the intern, ignore a call from your wife, start the show! The band strikes up, the curtains part, walk out and monologue. Tell your jokes for the whole world. Make fun of the president—whoever's president, doesn't matter. Make fun, poke a hole, turn to Camera Two and...

Hot red all the way up and down. Did a doctor just come in? Can someone take care of all this piss and shit?

Momma, I think I'm in trouble.





BRIAN

5 HOURS AFTER THE INCIDENT

Brian waits outside Mack's room, wondering what's taking Loretta so long to get to the hospital.

Poor Cormac. It's become a sort of mantra for him over the last hour or so. As if repeating the words enough times might break the barrier that separates God from the rest of us, so that the Divine's wide attention will turn in Mack's direction and bless him with a quick recovery.

The truth was that it hurt Brian—physically, literally—to see Mack in a state of pain. And that this state, under these circumstances, was so abject made it almost too much to bear.

When, a few years ago, Mack fell off his motorcycle and broke his leg, Brian was there—he made daily visits to the Bensons' house in Westchester (via first a train, and then a taxicab that he paid for out of pocket), toting with him a complement of magazines and books that might perk the host up as he nursed his injury.

Brian was there when Mack got dengue fever on a remote shoot in the Philippines; the dutiful producer pulled every available string to ensure that his dear friend was seen by the best doctors in Manila.



This kind of pain-symbiosis, whereby Brian took on the ailments of his boss, went beyond merely the *physical*: when Mack was distressed, so too was Brian.

Brian recalls when a modest indiscretion involving a junior staffer—a small flirtation with a member of the page program, some girl named Shawna or Jackie or God knows what—put Mack's future as The Voice of Late Night in jeopardy.

"She's gonna tell the press," Mack cried to him. "Loretta's gonna leave me. The show'll be canceled. I'll be completely ruined!"

And so Brian went about a kind of odious work that he considered his solemn duty: marshaling the network's lawyers; sending threatening, vague letters to the unfortunate intern (whom he felt kind of bad about intimidating, but them's the breaks, kiddo!); pouring Mack's scotches and assuring him that, yes, everything was taken care of, don't worry, you're safe and no one's gonna say a goddamn word about anything.

Why go to such despicable lengths to save Mack's reputation? Yes, it was a form of self-preservation—as went the fate of the show, so went the fate of Brian's career. But: it was more than that. The capital-T Truth was that Brian loved Mack. Physically. Literally.

When he'd wake up naked next to some guy, after a night dancing or drinking or walking through a museum, Brian would imagine his lover to have Mack's face—imagined he was smiling Mack's smile, was nuzzling Mack's nose into the back of Brian's neck. Mack was the absolute, gravity-consuming locus of Brian's mental, romantic, and sexual energy. The funniest, kindest, weirdest man he had ever known—the type of person you meet only once in a lifetime, if you're lucky.



Brian had been there from the beginning, and he'd be there until the end. Long after Loretta leaves, long after the newspaper reports, after the plastic surgery and the rehabilitation and the inevitable on-screen comeback. He'd stay right outside Cormac's hospital door, like a sentry, ready to greet his friend when he finally rises, and joke, "Try being a little funny, why don't ya, pal?"



CADENCE

5 HOURS AFTER THE INCIDENT

Cadence fishes in her purse for a fresh pack. Once this is all over, I'm quitting, she tells herself. It's Nicorette and yoga from here on out.



What did she like about having sex with Mack Benson? For starters, he had an incredibly gentle touch—more loving, more ginger than the grubby hands and tongues of some of the boys she'd slept with at college. He caressed her, and that was a thing completely novel in Cadence's limited sexual experience.

There was also the matter of adrenaline: she felt a rush every time he gestured from his desk; the arc of his finger—first beckoning from his chair, and later under her panties—sent electricity zooming up her spine, making the white hairs on the back of her neck stand at complete attention.

Why was it so charged? Maybe it was because he was married. Maybe it was because he was famous. Maybe it was that they were doing it in his office, just down the hall from the writers room, and catering, and the tiny corridor that led to the stage, the walls of which were festooned with pictures of Mack on air, behind his desk, interviewing an endless parade of celebrities, some of whom were supermodels.

The charge worked in reverse, too: she was ashamed, felt a deep sense of aching regret, and walked away from each erotic encounter completely uncertain as to whether she was a willing part in the exchange. It's not that she was forced to do anything. Mack was, after all, the most gentle and kind man she'd ever been around.

But that was just it—he was a man, on the cusp of fifty, with a house out in Westchester and an intimidating wife that glowered in her direction every time she visited the set. For all of the lightness to Mack's touch and demeanor, Cadence felt somehow thrust into his arms by unseen forces, as if invisible strings were being pulled to puppeteer her toward an intimate act.

She didn't know how to square any of this, didn't know whether she was a being of free will or not...and so she smoked. There's no problem in this godforsaken world of sin that two drags on a skimuy stick of tobacco can't solve, her uncle Ray always said.



Across the curb, two EMT workers, a male and a female, stumble into an ambulance parked just outside the ER. From her spot, Cadence can hear their entire conversation.

"If you mix an opioid with a prescription acid reflux medication, you kind of float behind your eyes," the male says.

"That wasn't acid reflux medicine, Mike," the female responds.

"Huh?" he says.

"You took a different, stronger opioid," the female says.

"Well that explains a lot, Jenny," the male replies. "That just about maps the entire universe for me."

The engine turns over, and the two drive the ambulance out of the parking lot, hitting a street sign as they round the corner.

As she opens a new pack—peels off the plastic wrapping, folds down the foil, and flips the center cig for good luck—Cadence sees Mack's wife rushing through the automatic doors of the emergency ward and into the hospital. Nicorette and yoga after tonight, she promises herself.





LORETTA

5 HOURS AFTER THE INCIDENT

Loretta stomps through the automatic doors, passes a roomful of injured people waiting to be admitted, and approaches the intake desk.

"Mack Benson," she says to the cow-eyed woman sitting behind a computer.

"Who?" the woman asks, with a look on her face as if she's forgotten her own name.

"The King of Late Night TV!" Loretta shouts.

"Mack Flippin' Benson!"



The divorce attorneys at Sweet & Associates LLP laid our her case thusly: Cormac Patrick Benson, Jr. was guilty of a number of transgressions that breached the sacred and legally binding compact of marriage.

Item One — Infidelity. Mack was a known lecher, wholly unable to keep his dick in his pants. He had slept with, by Loretta's count: at least six interns; a handful of actresses; the every-other-week cleaning lady of their West-chester home; Loretta's own sister. He was constantly flossing his bright white teeth, because at any minute he might find himself with his tongue down the throat of some fawning college co-ed or young, giggling starlet.

Item(s) Two—Alcoholism & Verbal Abuse. Though known far and wide for his easy affability, Mack was, in fact, a mean drunk. He put back at least three fingers of scotch per night, after which he often berated his wife for not doing enough around the house or you never have dimner ready when I get home or why don't you ever wear anything sexy anymore? The accusations were manifold, but Loretta knew the organizing injustice from which they all extended: Mack had always wanted a baby,

and Loretta couldn't give him one. She was being punished, going on fifteen years now, for her barren womb.

Item Three — Neglect. A kind of function of Item One and Two; Loretta walked through this world completely alone. She couldn't talk to her husband. She'd cut ties with her sister. She had no friends in Westchester, no friends back home in Michigan, no earthly companions in this entire crummy world. Mack, by way of his indiscretions and unkindness, had left Loretta a prisoner—trapped in a solitary confinement of mind, body, and circumstance.

Having documented all of this, the attorneys ascertained that under fair terms of separation, Loretta was entitled to no less than half of Mack's net worth, which amounted to about eighty million dollars. Loretta intended to take the cash and move as far away from the city as possible, to a house without a television.

But now here she was, clacking her high heels through hospital corridors, on her way to her husband's bedside. A Burmese python had squeezed his body and chomped his beautiful face. The best laid plans, or something like that.



At the end of the hall, she sees Brian waiting by a door.

"Hi, Loretta," he says almost inaudibly, unable to meet her gaze.

"Is he in there?" she asks, pointing to the

"They have him on a lot of meds," Brian says. "On account of the broken bones, and the lacerations, and..." he trails off.

"What?" she asks.

"All that b-blood," he stammers. "I still can't believe it."

He begins to cry, and her first instinct is to hug him.

"I just love him so much," Brian whispers.
"I know you do," Loretta says. "We all do."





5 HOURS AFTER THE INCIDENT

Is Loretta on her way? And where's Brian? Where in God's name are all my people?!

Can feel cold wind whistling through my cheeks. Under gauze, can feel scabs starting to be born. The moneymaker's been compromised.

Rain tapping on my windowsill? No, just the drip of intravenous juice. *Drip, drip, drip,...*



Do believe I've been a bad boy. Naughty little Cormac, sticking his pud into anything that walks. Also imbibing quite a lot, truth be told. More than one should, full disclosure.

What abouth the cocaine?

That, too. Thanks for the reminder, Mr. Snake!

But golly, have you ever seen a thin, young woman in a bralette? Mercy me, it scrambles my circuits something good.

You're a philanderer, Mack.

Funny how your lisp goes away when you're showing off that Ivy League vocabulary, Snaky.

You may have done your dirty business to me, but I got me an ace up my sleeve: Mack's got the lowdown intel on you, my slithering friend.

And here it is: I know you're the Devil. Mr. Satan himself. You peddled your rotten apples and got my parents' parents' parents' parents in deep doo-doo. With this knowledge I do banish you from the room. Good riddance, prick!



...why haven't you left?
You're not making any thenth, Cormac.
I know that. It's all this goddamn medicine

being pumped into my blood. I tried to tell the nurses, but the holes in my face are all confused. You try to make sound out of one, but it winds up coming out the other...

Where's Loretta? Where is my betrothed? Have been not very good to her, hand to God. Have spoken words brought forth by Beelzebub's Infernal Scotch Whisky. Such as god you're a killjoy. Such as why don't you ever wear anything sexy anymore? Such as just try and divorce me. I dare you.

...she is trying, by the way. A buddy of mine saw her downtown coming out of the offices of Sweet & Associates. What? No, I don't blame her. She's got every right.

Understand, Señor Scales: I brought this on myself.



I just wanted to be someone's daddy! But Loretta's body said: no way, José. We tried IUI, IVF, donor eggs, all the doctors' holy fertility juju. Nada.

I used her biology as an excuse to be mean. Held her own biology against her. Fucked her sister in the upstairs bathroom during Thanksgiving dinner. Are you hearing this?

Oh. The snake seems to be gone. Everyone seems to be gone. The nurses, the doctors, my lovers, the audience...

Welcome, ladies and gentlemen, to Tonight, Tonight. I'm Mack Benson, and my only guest this evening is a bedpan full of my own shit.



Loretta, is that you? My god, what a beautiful face. Know this: you are my people, forever.

You, too, Brian. I see you hiding back there. Turn to Camera One. Turn to Camera Two. Give them that Benson smile.

Alright, folks. We're having some technical difficulties. I'm gonna nod out for a bit. Don't go anywhere.











RICK SACCHARINE

ANIMAL TRAINER

The Burmese python (Python bivittatus, if animal nomenclature is the sort of thing that gets you hard) is one of the largest species of snakes known to man. It occurs naturally throughout large swaths of South and Southeast Asia, from Nepal to Bangladesh to Myanmar to Vietnam to China. (It also occurs as an invasive species, particularly in parts of the Florida Everglades, where men and women possessed of questionable amounts of grey matter believe that breeding giant, carnivorous snakes is a hobby worth taking up in one's spare time.)

These suckers can grow to eighteen feet long, and are exceedingly fond of doing violence to all variety of plump mammals: foxes, rabbits, opossums, coyotes, talk show hosts, you name it.

As you may have gathered, a Burmese python kills its prey by first attacking it with its razor-sharp, rearward-pointing teeth... after which it wraps its massive, disgusting body around the poor animal, contracting its muscles until the prey has died from constriction. Ain't that something?



Speaking of constriction, everything is getting smaller, all the time. The walls of the room are inching closer to the bed; Magellan circumnavigated the whole globe; the hot red heart of the sun moves nearer toward us with each passing year. (Can you feel its fiery breath? Is the temperature rising in your hometown?)



Gosh, folks just *love* to search for the moral of a story, don't they? (In fact, you might be doing so right now!) But here's a little secret: most stories (real stories) don't have any larger significance; they are not greater than the sum of their parts. It's all just stuff that happens to people, over and over again. Nobody learns a thing, and history does its repetitive dance through the movements of tragedy, then farce, and then back around again to the beginning. Like a giant, meaningless ouroboros—the goshdarn snake devours its own tail! (It devours other stuff, too.)



Does Mack learn the error of his ways? Does he make a heroic, made-for-TV comeback? Do he and Loretta patch things up and revive their sclerotic relationship?

Maube!

But equally possible: he'll be disfigured for the rest of his life, lose half his media fortune to his ex, and be sued into oblivion by a passel of former Tonight, Tonight interns, pages, and employees.

I can't tell you what happens, because it hasn't happened yet. Mack's out there now (with Brian at his feet like a sorry basset hound), going through physical therapy, doing his best to remember how to walk without a limp.

Comedian Jimmy Fuller is sitting in for Mack on Tonight, Tonight, and the ratings are actually pretty good! (There's talk amongs tome execs of giving Jimmy the eleven o'clock slot next fall, and moving Mack to either longform travel specials or a prestige-format weekly podcast.)

Anything can happen, folks. That's the point. We just don't know!

An animal can be real cute—until it isn't. A person can be beloved—until they aren't. It all proceeds in spinning cycles, coiling like a snake. Follow its body all the way around, and see how it sinks its fangs right into its own backside.

Well isn't he friendly?





TONIGHT, TONIGHT WITH MACK BENSON



TELETHOR

STAY UP LATE AND SAVE SOME GUY'S LIFE

LIVE, EXCITING, IN PERSON —

★ MUSIC ★ ENTERTAINMENT





BROADCAST FROM SOMEWHERE! VARIETY SHOW TO BENEFIT JERRY, WHO'S PRETTY SICK! CHAPTER 24
SPONSORED BY:
PRINCE
MORAZZO
O'HALLORAN























555 - 1234









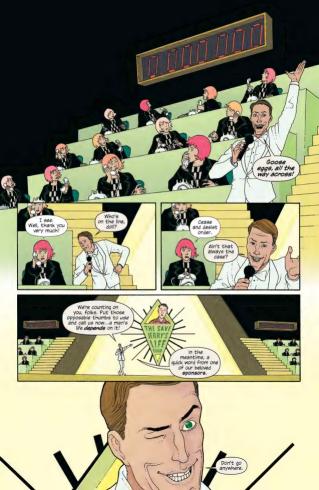






Yeesh!





























Now in Raspberry Surprise and Good Ol' Fashioned Vanilla flavors.



"I'm not sure what to tell you, Jerry..."

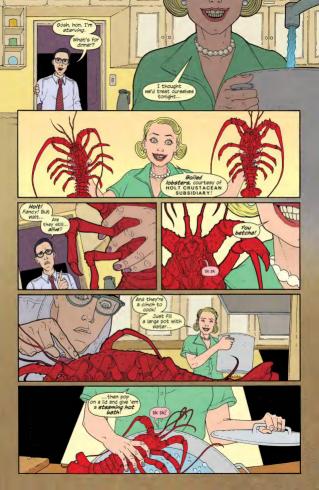
























Girls, tell me we've got some big spenders on the line!





































SELF medication is the only OTC mood solution that makes every aspect of life more bearable.



















When you're the one who's tapping for help!

IN LOVING MEMORY



JERRY "JER" DONALDSON

MARCH 4th, 1985 - MAY 12th, 2021



He was a man of certain qualities.

He had numerous hobbies,
and a number of deeply held beliefs.

He was a person about which it might
be said, "That's Jerry Donaldson."

If you're having trouble with addiction, consider talking to someone you trust, or visiting shatterproof.org

IN FOND RECOLLECTION

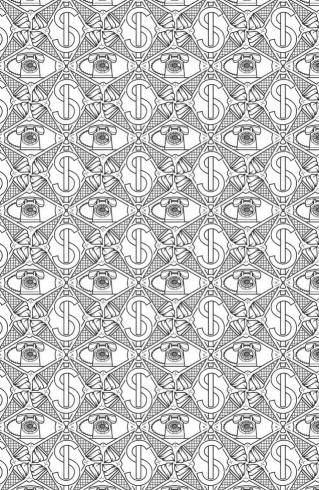


ROSCO THE BORDER COLLIE

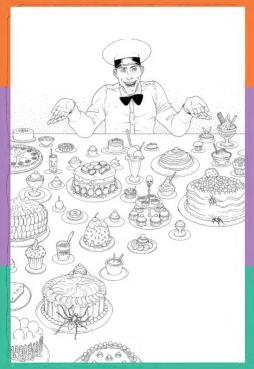
FEBRUARY 25, 2017 - MAY 12th, 2021



This one's on you, folks.



COVER GALLERY &C.



What follows are variant covers from the sixth volume of ICE CREAM MAN, by (in order): Andrea Sorrentino, Sam Wolfe Connelly, Valentine De Landro, and Tiffany Turrill. Also: some rad toy photography by ICM fan Justin Mitchiner.

Get vaccinated—it's an act of love and protection for yourself and others.

















"A perfectly bitter confection for those with a taste for short-form shockers."

— Publishers Weekly

"You'll never look at your doublescoop the same way again."

— Vulture/NYMaa

"We loved it like we love mint chocolate chip ice cream, which

is to say we loved it a lot." —Nerdist

"You'll want a scoop of this comic because we're in for a treat."

—Geek.com

"F*cking awesome. The writing is strange and deeply unsettling, and the artwork is gorgeous."

-Brian K. Vaughan

"Incredibly good."

— The Oregonian

"Will have you questioning everything."

—Amazon Book Review



A DR. VINK FANCY HD RIP

- RIPPIN POORLY SINCE MAY 2022 -

EDITOR'S NOTE:

THIS FANCY HD RIP WON'T TRIGGER ANYONE'S PHOBIA OF SCARY ALL WORRY NOT! THOSE FRIGHTENING COMPUTERS LEFT THESE IMAGES UNTOUCHED





DIGITAL COMICS PRESERVATION

RIPPING
SCANNING
SCANNING
COMICS
ARCHIVING



IF YOU LIKE IT

AND HAVE THE MEANS TO DO SO

PURCHASE A PHYSICAL COPY

HELP YOUR LOCAL COMIC BOOK SHOPS!

